

# UPDATE

Montana Department of Commerce

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## New Year's Greetings to Our Partners in Montana's Tourism Industry

With the Christmas season behind us and the New Year upon us, we at Travel Montana are geared up for the 60th Montana Legislative Session.

We are already feeling the rush and excitement that the session brings. As of this writing there are 2,204 requests for legislation. We also have several new players, which bring both opportunities and challenges. Joining the ranks this session are 33 freshmen. It will be critical that we educate and inform these decision makers on the importance of the tourism and film industry to the state of Montana.

Legislators tell us that they listen closely to their own constituents; therefore, it is vital that you take the time to share your ideas and opinions with your local representatives. There are several tools available to you to assist in this education effort. General information on the Montana State Legislature can be accessed at [www.leg.mt.gov](http://www.leg.mt.gov). Located on the Institute for Tourism and Recreation (ITRR) website [www.itrr.umt.edu](http://www.itrr.umt.edu) are the popular

"Niche News" which provide market specific statistics for local facts and speaking points. And for information on Travel Montana's marketing and promotional efforts, I would recommend our Travel Montana Intranet site, [www.travelmontana.mt.gov](http://www.travelmontana.mt.gov).

Throughout the session, Travel Montana will provide weekly email notices "News from the Front" which focuses on Legislation pertinent to tourism and film. If you are interested in receiving this weekly email, please contact Carmen Levick at 406-841-2873 or email [CLevick@mt.gov](mailto:CLevick@mt.gov).

We truly rely on you, our partners, to assist with building awareness of the economic impacts and importance of the tourism and film industry. Together we can help strengthen Montana's economy.

Here's to a strong and vibrant 2007!

Betsy Baumgart



Administrator,  
Montana Promotion Division

## Montana Sees Increases in Overseas Offerings

Montana attended World Travel Market, held in London this past November along with state staff from Idaho, Wyoming and South Dakota under the Rocky Mountain International (RMI) banner.

The show is continually one of the best marketing opportunities of the year. In addition to tour operators, RMI partners also met with 17 journalists and had a number of additional market meetings with tour companies from Italy, France, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Spain and

Denmark. Results of these meetings included itinerary planning for current and future fly-drives, potential press fam trips and discussions of prospective RoundUp and Mega-fam attendees.

The UK remains third in U.S. visitation behind only Mexico and Canada, with 4,345,000 visitors in 2005 to the U.S., up 1%. Although 2006 visitation is running about 4% down for the year, a very favorable exchange rate of close to \$2 U.S. dollars for each British Pound means that travel to anywhere in the U.S. is still a bargain for those from the UK. Much of the current decline is to Florida, so the RMI region continues

to grow as evidenced by the fact that the RMI TRIP (tourism research inventory product) report numbers for the four-state region from the UK were up 8% to 1,038,715 from 2005 to 2006. Montana's numbers (as measured by product on the shelf) in the same time period grew 9%, from 254,080 to 276,128 room nights offered in the state.

Also, the most recent RMI TRIP report shows a 6% increase in the number of Montana overnights offered in tour operators' brochures in UK, Germany, France, Italy and the Benelux countries of Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg. Total overnights offered for FY05 were 563,736, while FY06 totaled 595,089; an increase of 31,353 overnights offered. The highest number is in the UK at 276,128, followed by Italy (114,515), Germany (85,523), France (73,334) and the Benelux (45,589).

For more information on Travel Montana's overseas marketing efforts, please contact Pam Gosink 406-841-2895, [pgosink@mt.gov](mailto:pgosink@mt.gov).

## CTAP Grant Supports "Smoking Boomer Rail Trail"

A \$10,000 Community Tourism Assessment Program (CTAP) Grant from Travel Montana helped the Harlowton community complete a 1-mile recreational trail named the "Smoking Boomer Rail Trail." The trail connects Harlowton's Chief Joseph Park with its historical Milwaukee Railroad Depot located at the end of Central Avenue, the community's main street. Chief Joseph Park offers overnight camping, rodeo, playgrounds and a rest area.

The trail was named after Smoking Boomer, a dog who lived around the railroad depot in the 1930s and 40s. A railroad

foreman befriended Boomer, taught the dog to smoke a pipe, wear safety glasses and even stand on his head. Boomer was often seen greeting depot visitors with his tricks and posing for photos. Smoking Boomer's story is told on one of a number of the trail's interpretive signs sharing Harlowton's rich railroad history.

The Harlowton Community Tourism Action Committee joined with the local Rail Trail Committee, Depot Committee, City of Harlowton, Wheatland County, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks and numerous volunteers to complete the \$17,217 project. The community became eligible for the Travel Montana CTAP Grant after working with other Wheatland County representatives to complete the 10-month Community Tourism Assessment process in 2004-05.

Since 1991, 38 communities have utilized the CTAP process offered by Travel Montana in partnership with MSU Extension and UM's Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research. The program has awarded \$466,000 in tourism project grant funds to communities completing the process.

For a complete list, visit the Tourism Development and Education section of our intranet site at [www.travelmontana.mt.gov](http://www.travelmontana.mt.gov).

## Strategic Plan Outreach Workshops Update

About 275 Montanans participated in the seven Public Outreach Workshops held across the state in November and December. These workshops began the updating process for the Montana Tourism and Recreation Strategic Plan. The attendees represented a good cross section of people, businesses, organizations and communities involved or interested in Montana's tourism and recreation programs and activities.

The strategic plan contractor, The Hingston Roach Group, is compiling the vision statements and issues identified at the workshops and will be placing them on the strategic plan website for public view: [www.travelmontana.mt.gov/2008strategicplan](http://www.travelmontana.mt.gov/2008strategicplan). If you were unable to attend the workshops and would like to submit comments, go to the website and use the comment form email function provided on the page.

The next steps of the process include more information gathering and conducting an online survey of tourism and recreation stakeholders to help prioritize the visions and issues received so far in the process. The Hingston Roach Group will meet with state

and federal agency representatives who are part of the Montana Tourism and Recreation Initiative Working Group in early February to gather input. They will also gather input and provide an update on the plan at the February Tourism Advisory Council meeting in Helena.

## "Montana—Trek To Success"

### Governor's Conference Materials Online

The agenda, registration forms, exhibitor and sponsor opportunities and applications, lodging information and more are now available on the 2007 Montana Governor's Conference on Tourism and Recreation website: [www.travelmontana.mt.gov/conference](http://www.travelmontana.mt.gov/conference).

The 33rd annual gathering of the Montana Tourism and Recreation Industry is scheduled for April 2-3, 2007, at Helena's Red Lion Colonial Hotel. Based on the conference theme "Montana—Trek to Success," the agenda offers a wide variety of educational and discussion sessions on topics ranging from effective internet marketing, branding and publicity to public lands and tourism, geotourism, statewide strategic planning and Helena area field trips.

The conference registration fee is \$120 through March 16, \$140 March 17-31 and \$160 April 1-3. The conference room block at the Red Lion Colonial Hotel will be held until March 8. The Best Western Helena Great Northern Hotel is also holding a room block for conference attendees until March 9.

## Helena Ghosts and Capitol City Haunts

If you like ghost stories and you like history, be sure to be in Helena on Sunday, April 1, for Helena's Historic Haunts Tour being offered to those in town for the 2007 Governor's Conference. Lee Holmes of Last Chance Trolley Tours, Inc., and Montana Historical Society historian/author Ellen Baumler are teaming up to provide two Sunday night tours that will help you "discover the darker secrets of some of Helena's best-known landmarks and lesser-known locations." These were popular tours at the 2005 conference. Reservations are required. There is a \$5 fee to help defray expenses. To reserve a seat,

call or email: 1-888-423-1023, 406-442-1023, [lhomes@ixi.net](mailto:lhomes@ixi.net). Tour times and details are on the Governor's Conference website: [www.travelmontana.mt.gov/conference](http://www.travelmontana.mt.gov/conference).

## New Passport Regulations Impact Canadian Visitors

Montana's tourism partners have been closely watching and weighing in on the Congressional actions regarding the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI) due to the impact the new passport laws will have on our Canadian visitors.

The WHTI requires all air travelers to the U.S. to have a passport or other secure document by January 23, 2007; this includes formerly exempt travelers from Canada, Mexico and the Caribbean. In addition, all travelers by land and sea must meet this requirement by an unspecified deadline not later than June 1, 2009.

GetAPassportNow.com has been created to assist and inform travelers about these new passport requirements. The one-page site explains the new passport requirements, cites the deadlines and provides links where citizens of the U.S., Canada and Mexico can get information and applications for their respective passports.

Currently, 8% of Montana's total visitors come from Canada. (This is an increase of 2% over 2001.)

Travel Montana encourages our partners throughout Montana's travel industry to provide links to GetAPassportNow.com on their websites in order to fully inform our visitors of these regulation changes at our borders.

*Alternative accessible formats of this document will be provided to disabled persons on request.*

## Calendar of Events:

### January

- 12 SEGP Applications due
- 18-28 Sundance Film Festival
- 22-23 North American Journeys (NAJ) Tour Operator Summit, Los Angeles, CA
- 24-26 RMI RoundUp in Hot Springs and Deadwood, SD
- 27-2/1 American Bus Association Convention, Grapevine, TX

### February

- 5-7 TAC Meeting, Best Western Great Northern, Helena
- 14-16 BankTravel Convention, Jacksonville, FL

*For all of the latest Montana tourism industry information log on to:*  
**[travelmontana.mt.gov](http://travelmontana.mt.gov)**

